

UWFP Delaware River Location Monthly Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, December 16, 2025
11:00-12:00 ET on Zoom

Attendance:

Eve Quinones, PDE

John Harrod, PDE

Haley Burns, PDE

Kathy Klein, PDE

Kelsey Brooks, University of Maryland

Network Coordinator

Zach Nemeec, PA Sea Grant

William Ethridge, FEMA Region 3

Megan Mackey, EPA Region 3

Donald Farrell, Northeast Rising

I. Welcome & Introductions (11:00-11:10AM)

- Welcome
- Overview of meeting agenda

II. Event Updates & Discussions (11:10 – 11:40AM)

- **Urban Waters workplan 2026**
 - Edits provided by the workgroup have been completed. The next steps are in-house review and approval. Additional time was given to the workgroup for their final review due to Eve's unexpected absence after our last meeting. Eve is now focused on completing these remaining steps.
- **Artist in Residence Program update**
 - PDE's artist for the AiR pilot program, Eurhi, has resolved her insurance challenges. She previously faced difficulties obtaining the required coverage due to gaps in prior work, making this a lengthy process. Eve has sent her the updated contract, and PDE expects to receive the signed version soon.
 - Kathy highlighted the importance of incorporating diverse art forms and emphasized flexibility in the types of art that could be included in the program.
- **Job Creation & Workforce Development: The Water Tower**
 - Kathy Klein emphasized identifying high-priority locations for branding, workforce development, and financing on-the-ground watershed projects. She also noted the importance of integrating climate resilience efforts given current environmental challenges.
 - To improve collaboration, a need to create a shared resource that helps partners understand ongoing initiatives across the watershed. PDE's new website will feature a

Climate Resilience Hub, providing centralized access to information. UW partners were asked to share resources for inclusion in this hub.

- Workforce Development:
 - The Water Tower in Atlanta, Georgia, was highlighted as an innovative example. The program director attended last week's meeting and shared their approach:
 - They provide wrap-around services for participants, focusing on training and career growth without strict background requirements.
 - Their work spans both U.S. and international projects.
 - Job postings will be included in PDE's Climate Resilience Hub to connect community members with opportunities.
- Kathy invited partners to explore collaboration opportunities with The Water Tower.
 - More information is available at: <https://www.theh2otower.org/>
- **Community Cohort Connections Meeting: Summary of recent in-person meeting**
 - This event was hosted by PDE on Friday, October 17th at The American Water Headquarter Building located at the Camden, NJ Waterfront from 12pm to 3pm.
 - 11 participants registered; 8 attended. Attendance was significantly impacted by the recent government shutdown, which prevented federal partners from participating and limited opportunities for community organizations to engage with them during the event.
 - Networking Lunch (First Hour):
 - Attendees connected over lunch and shared updates on projects and initiatives within their respective cities.
 - Presentations (Second Hour):
 - Linda Cairnes and Joey Rodriguez presented on their organizations' work and how they collaborate with communities to advance initiatives.
 - Tour of RCA Pier Park (Final Hour):
 - Participants toured RCA Pier Park, a 98-year-old pier transformed into a 2.2-acre public park on Camden's Central Waterfront. The park offers recreational space for residents and visitors, including the recently added RCA Fishing Pier, which provides new access for fishing along the Delaware River between Camden and Philadelphia.
- **Collaborative Community Projects NFWF:**
 - **Round 1 – NEPA CatEx submitted**
 - Four of the five Round One Collaborative Community Projects funded under this program currently have NEPA Categorical Exclusions under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as of December 2025.
 - The fifth project is on hold due to significant staff losses at the lead community organization caused by federal funding cuts. We plan to re-engage with them in mid-January to assess capacity and determine if the project can proceed.
 - **Round 2 – Current Conversations**

- PDE is currently in discussions with six organizations to establish additional projects under this funding source: two in Chester, two in Philadelphia, one in Wilmington, and one in Camden.
- To date, two of the six projects have signed contracts, and PDE is preparing NEPA Categorical Exclusion Checklists for submission to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review.
- **Hatchery Update**
 - Kathy Klein shared that PDE has partnered with Bartram’s Garden for the past seven years to develop a hatchery on Bartram’s land. Unfortunately, the project was paused for six months due to a \$2.5 million funding gap. After the pause and attempts to rework the design, the gap remained at \$2.5 million, even with a scaled-down plan due to increased construction fees. Neither organization was able to close the gap through fundraising, so PDE made the difficult decision not to proceed with building the hatchery at Bartram’s site. Despite this, PDE maintains a strong relationship with Bartram’s and continues collaborating on other initiatives.
 - PDE is now exploring opportunities to build the hatchery with another organization that can provide additional funding. This facility would serve as a critical resource for cultivating freshwater mussels, oysters, and possibly submerged aquatic vegetation (SAVs). PDE cannot complete the hatchery without a significant funding commitment but remains hopeful about moving forward with a new partner.
- **Quick Discussion: Meeting Date and Time**
 - Eve asked the group if the third Tuesday of each month from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM remains a convenient meeting time for everyone. She noted that she is preparing to transition meetings from Zoom to Microsoft Teams and wants to finalize the schedule for the upcoming year.
 - Eve will send out a Microsoft Teams calendar invite for all 2026 meetings before January 2026.

III. Partner Updates & Resource Sharing (11:40 – 12:00AM)

- Roundtable: share updates, events, initiatives, and other opportunities
 - Zach Nemec, PA SeaGrant, shared the Philadelphia Marine Debris Community Action Coalition Community Meeting will take place at 6:30PM at Friends Hospital (4641 E Roosevelt Blvd. Philadelphia, PA 19124) on 12/17. They’ll explore what microplastics are, where they’re found, and how the new Philadelphia Marine Debris Action Coalition is working to protect local waterways.
 - i. Register here: <https://ttfwatershed.org/event/pmac2025/>
 - Zach also shared the Penn State Sea Grant Summer Internship Program. An internship opportunity for students interested in marine and environmental science, offering hands-on experience in research and outreach.
 - i. <https://seagrant.psu.edu/summer-internship/>
 - Kelsey Brooks shared a funding opportunity: <https://climatesmartcommunity.org/funding/#step1>. Applications are due on March 12th, 2026, and she would like to convene with interested parties no later than January

2026. The opportunity is geographically limited to EPA Region 3 and requires participation from a Community-Based Organization (CBO), a government partner that is a town, city, county, district, regional or Tribal government, or a special planning commission and an adaptation practitioner which would be the University of Maryland. Contact Kelsey at kebrooks@umd.edu.

- i. Additional resource: <https://adaptationregistry.org/?view=cards>.
- Kathy asked partners to explore opportunities for engagement in urban sectors and to help identify individuals who could be connected to the UW workgroup.
 - i. Megan Mackey, EPA Region 3, offered to help fill some gaps by connecting with Nicole Lick.

IV. Next meeting: January 20, 2026, via Microsoft Teams